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Criminal Justice Research Solicitation:

Crime Control Theory:

Research on Effects of Criminal Sanctions

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U.S. Department of Justice

National Institute of Justice

Washington, D.C. 20531

September, 1981

Dear Colleague:

The National Institute of Justice is pleased to announce the continuation of its program of support for research on crime control effects associated with the exercise of the sanctioning powers of the criminal justice system. Most simply stated, this program is aimed at development of a scientific understanding of how crime levels in our society are affected by formal sanctioning practices.

Obviously, this very broad program charter defines a correspondingly broad field of research interests. It is our expectation that sustained progress can only be made through a program that offers support for a range of projects over the spectrum of theoretical and applied research and that encourages the diversity of insights afforded by a variety of disciplinary approaches.

We hope you will find this announcement of interest. I would also appreciate your bringing it to the attention of any of your colleagues we may have missed in this mailing.

Sincerely,

Harry M. Bratt
Acting Director

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CRIME CONTROL THEORY

I. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The mechanisms by which the activities of the criminal justice system might affect the incidence of crime in society have been classed traditionally as general deterrence, incapacitation, specific deterrence and rehabilitation. General deterrence theory argues that some individuals refrain from committing criminal acts because they assess the risk of incurring the law's sanctions or the possible severity of the penalties (or some combination of these) as being unacceptably high. Incapacitation (incarceration) acts to control crime by denying the offender access to victims and thus prevents those crimes that would have been committed had the offender been free to do so. Specific deterrence theories assert that the personal experience of criminal sanctions operates as a disincentive to future criminal behavior on the part of those sanctioned. Conversely, rehabilitation focuses on the effectiveness of the positive incentives toward future law abiding behavior that are offered to the sanctioned offender through a variety of criminal justice programs.

Proposals are invited for research projects that could contribute to a better understanding of how (and how well) these mechanisms work as social forces acting to control the incidence of crime. The following list of project classes, while not intended to be encyclopedic in its coverage, might serve to illustrate the scope and variety of the program's interests.

1. Theoretical and conceptual studies aimed at explicating how the efficacy of society's formal agencies of crime control might relate to or derive from more fundamental theories of social and behavioral control.

2. Modeling studies aimed at continued development of general frameworks of analysis that embody in their structure some plausible theory of crime control and facilitate empirical testing of theory.

3. Criminal career research directed towards development of improved taxonomies of career patterns or towards achieving a better understanding of how criminal justice system interventions affect the evolution of offender's life-styles.

4. Perceptions research investigating questions such as determinants of variability in some population's assessment of sanction risk or sanction cost.

5. Experiments or quasi-experiments intended to collect empirical evidence on variation in crime control effects with variation in sanction threat.

6. Design studies. -- Certain questions of importance to this subject matter area might best be studied through research projects of a size and complexity that are beyond the normal funding capabilities of this program. In order to obtain support for such studies, this Office would have to argue for supplemental funding in its budget request. Under the on-going program, however, support might be made available for modestly budgeted "design" grants: studies concerned with such things as refinement of the conceptual bases of a larger piece of research contemplated, development and pre-testing of measuring instruments. etc. Of course, the award of any such "design" grants must not be interpreted as a commitment to continued funding of the project on the part of the National Institute.

Again, the above listing in intended to suggest the general nature of the program rather than to define some set of priorities and exclude classes of research projects not mentioned. Proposal authors should keep in mind, however, that the ultimate objective is the evolution of a scientifically sound understanding of the role that formal sanctions play in the control of crime in our society. All proposals should, therefore, describe clearly not only the research project for which funding is sought but also precisely how this research fits into the development of a comprehensive theory.

A comment might be made here about substantive priorities. The program's primary concern is with achieving a better understanding of the mechanisms of control of the common type of felony crime roughly characterized as "Part I Offenses" in the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports classification. It is, of course, recognized that important contributions to such an objective can in some cases be made through research on a more widely defined class of behaviors. In addition there are evidently other types of serious law violations whose control can be argued to merit research attention in their own right. Proposals for well designed projects of these kinds are by no means excluded from consideration a priori. All other things being equal, however, the competition for grant funds will favor those projects most directly tied to the program's concern with "Part I Offenses."

II. REVIEW PROCESS AND SELECTION

Interested researchers should submit proposals in accordance with Section III of this announcement. Proposals received will be reviewed by a joint panel of National Institute of Justice staff and researchers from outside the Institute who are chosen for the significance of their own work in fields related to the interests of this program.

The two main points to be considered in the course of this review are:

1. To what extent would the research, if successful, constitute an advance over the existing body of knowledge or contribute new insights to the development of theory?

2. Is the project design as it is described in the proposal both methodologically sound and feasible?

The result of the panel's deliberations will be the selection and recommendation of those proposals that would in its view constitute the most worthwhile crime control research program that could be supported with funds available in this fiscal year. Authority to make grant award is, of course, reserved to the Director of the National Institute of Justice.

FY'82 program budget allocations has not been established at this time; however support for this program has been tentatively set at a level between $500 thousand and $1 million.

III. HOW TO APPLY

Eight copies of fully executed proposals should be sent to:

Crime Control Theory Program
Office of Research and Evaluation Methods
National Institute of Justice
633 Indiana Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20531

A proposal consists of the following:

1. A completed and signed Federal Assistance application on Standard Form 424 and OJARS Form 4000/1.

2. A budget narrative.

3. A program narrative.

The program narrative is the technical description of the work to be undertaken. It is on the basis of the information presented in this part of the proposal that the review panel arrives at its funding recommendations. Applicants should be careful to ensure that this section contains clear and reasonably complete descriptions of a) the research question being addressed; b) the significance of this work to the overall development of crime control theory; c) the methodology, research design and general plan for conduct of the work; and d) the kind of products anticipated as resulting directly from the research (books, journal articles, monographs, etc.)

As attachments to the program narrative, applicants are required to furnish a project abstract of not more than 200 words, a short (1 page) schedule of the planned sequence of project activities, professional resumes of key project personnel, and an estimate of the total project costs.

IV. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION SCHEDULE

Two proposal review and funding cycles are planned in fiscal 1982. In order to be eligible for funding under the first cycle, the eight copies of the program narrative section of the proposal must be postmarked no later than December 5, 1981. Although we would encourage submission of complete proposals by that date, applicants will be given until December 19 to send in the required eight copies of SF 424, OJARS 4000/1 and the budget narrative.

For consideration in the program's second review cycle, the eight copies of the program narrative section must be postmarked no later than April 17, 1982, with copies of the SF 424, OJARS Form 4000/1 and budget narrative mailed by May 15, 1982.

V. FURTHER INFORMATION

In order to obtain copies of the required application forms or to get further information about the program or the application process, researchers should write to Joel H. Garner, Program Manager, Crime Control Theory Program, at the address in Section III above. Mr. Garner can be reached by phone at (202) 724-8265. Applicants who have a research idea but are uncertain of its appropriateness for funding under this program are encouraged to call Mr. Garner and discuss the idea with him before undertaking the considerable amount of effort required to plan their project in detail and write up a proposal that would be competitive.

VI. GRANTS PREVIOUSLY AWARDED

William Bowers, Northeastern University; "Deterrence and Data Disaggregation;" #79-NI-AX-0009.

Thomas F. Pogue, University of Iowa; "An Econometric Analysis of the Deterrence Effects of Arrest and Imprisonment;" #79-NI-AX-0015.

Isaac Ehrlich, SUNY, Buffalo; "Economic Analysis of Crime and Deterrence;" #79-NI-AX-0040.

Lee McPheters, Arizona State University; "Deterrence Effects of the Revised Arizona Criminal Code: A Quasi-Experiment;" #79-NI-AX-0041.

Thomas Orsagh, University of N.C.; "The Deterrent Effect of Arrest and Incarceration: A Criminometric Approach;" #79-NI-AX-0047.

Gilbert Geis, University of California at Irvine; "Deterring Automobile Repair Fraud;" #79-NI-AX-0050.

David F. Greenberg, New York University; "Crime Rates and Arrest Rates: A Causal Analysis;" #79-NI-AX-0054.

Llad Phillips, University of California, Santa Barbara,; "Identifying the Control Effects of Imprisonment;" #79-NI-AX-0069.

Franklin Zimring, University of Chicago; "New York's Double Crackdown on Juvenile Violence: A Policy Experiment in General Deterrence;" #79-NI-AX-0072.

William Bowers, Northeastern University; "Deterrence Processes and Effects: A Quasi-Experimental Approach;" #79-NI-AX-0074.

Colin Loftin, University of Michigan; "The Deterrent Effects of Michigan's Firearm Law;" #79-NI-AX-0094.

William Davidson, Michigan State University; "Incapacitation Theory: A Field Test;" #79-NI-AX-0113.

Alfred Blumstein and Jacqueline Cohen, Carnegie-Mellon University; "Analysis of Criminal Careers From An Incapacitation Perspective;" #79-NI-AX-0121.

Robert Willstadter, Spectrum Analysis; "An Analysis of Parameters of Adult Felon Crime Switch Probabilities;" #79-NI-AX-0129.

Stephen Stollmack and Carl Harris, ANALOGS, Inc.; "Modeling and Estimating Incapacitation Effects Using Police Investigation Data;" #79-NI-AX-0136.

Stephen Stollmack, ANALOGS; "Measuring Crime Switching Effects Using A Markov Process Model;" #80-NI-AX-0005.

Lawrence W. Sherman, Police Foundation; "The Specific Deterrent Effects of Arrests for Spouse Assaults;" #80-IJ-AX-0042.

Harold L. Votey, University of California; "Driving While Intoxicated: Behavioral Forces and Legal Sanctions for Control;" #80-IJ-CX-0054.

Malcolm Klein, University of Southern California; "Exploring Guidelines for Specific Deterrence Theory: Early Sanctions in the Juvenile Justice System;" #80-IJ-CX-0055.

Isaac Ehrlich, SUNY, Buffalo; "Economic Analysis of Crime and Deterrence;" #80-IJ-CX-0059.

David Greenberg, New York University; "Bank Robbery Deterrence;" #80-IJ-CX-0062.

William Bowers, Northeastern University; "Deterrence and Data Disaggregation;" #80-IJ-CX-0076.

William Minor, University of Maryland; "Sanctions, Perceptions and Deterrence: A Pilot Study;" #80-IJ-CX-0091.

Michael K. Block, Rhodes Associates; "Price Fixing and Anti-trust Enforcement: Retesting the Deterrence Hypothesis;" #80-IJ-CX-0105.

Llad Phillips, University of California, Santa Barbara; "Estimating Causal Forecasting Models for Felony Crime;" #81-IJ-CX-0019.

Thomas W. Mangione, University of Massachusetts - Boston; "Estimating the Role of Perceptions in Deterrence;" #81-IJ-CX-0021.

Raymond Paternoster, University of South Carolina; "Experiential and Deterrence Effects: An Examination of the Perceptions-Behavior Relationship;" #81-IJ-CX-0023.

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